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Winther, Helle

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# Dancing Days With Young People: An Art-Based Coproduced Research Film on Embodied Leadership, Creativity, and Innovative Education

Helle Winther<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The film *Dancing Days With Young People* is inspired by art-based research and performative social science. Here artists and researchers examine important issues together. The film follows 1 teacher, 21 university students, and 200 high school pupils from various cultural backgrounds. It focuses especially on the young university students in a challenging course of teaching emphasizing creativity, embodied leadership, and dance. Here, they also teach the high school pupils various styles of dance. Research shows that it can be challenging for many young people to develop teaching competency and the embodied leadership they will need in their impending work as teachers. This is also an issue in many university educations and other educational fields. Therefore, the research questions examined how we can develop somatic awareness, creativity, and embodied leadership through innovative educational processes. And how close-to-practice, artistic elicitation methods may contribute to both researching and portraying this process. The film was created by collaboration between a researcher and teacher, a documentary film instructor, a musician, and a creative film editor. The film was both part of the research process and the result of the creative collaborative. It may be regarded as a coproduced research publication in itself, as it visualizes and documents the findings of the project. Therefore, the film may be seen as a contribution to the growing field within performative social science. Here, the film illustrates especially well the intense moments in sensual emotional situations, which cannot be captured solely in the world of words. The findings show that embodied leadership may be developed through real-world learning processes in which joyous, vulnerable, and subjectively experienced risk-filled situations become part of a common creative educational journey. The teaching methods and the theme of embodiment and leadership may be applicable in wider educational fields.

## Keywords

Embodiment, leadership, innovative educational methods, art-based research, performative, participatory, young people, dance

## Introduction

The film *Dancing Days With Young People* is inspired by art-based research and performative social science. Here artists and researchers examine important issues together. The film follows 1 teacher, 21 university students, and 200 high school pupils. It focuses especially on the young university students in a challenging course of teaching, which emphasizes creativity, embodied leadership, and dance. Research shows that it can be challenging for many young people to develop teaching competency and the embodied leadership they will need in their impending work as teachers. This is also an issue in many university educations and other educational fields. Therefore, the research questions examined how we can develop somatic awareness, creativity, and embodied leadership through innovative educational processes.

And how close-to-practice, artistic elicitation methods may contribute to both researching and portraying this process. The film was created by collaboration between a researcher and teacher, a documentary film instructor, a musician, and a creative film editor. The film was both part of the whole research process and the result of the creative collaboration. The film may be regarded as a coproduced research publication in itself, as it visualizes and

<sup>1</sup> Department of Nutrition Exercise and Sport Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

## Corresponding Author:

Helle Winther, Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sport Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Nørre Allé 51, DK-2200 Copenhagen, Denmark.  
Email: [hwinther@nexs.ku.dk](mailto:hwinther@nexs.ku.dk)



documents the findings of the project, which are also based on written phenomenological-inspired experience descriptions from the university students. The film documents especially the intense moments in sensual emotional situations, which cannot be captured solely in the world of words. The film follows the students through a progressive process in which they gradually learn to be the captains of their own ships. The film also documents Dance Day, where the young university students teach 200 high school pupils various styles of dance. Here, there's also focus on creating joy in movement, creativity, and fellowship across age, sex, and culture. In fact, the national curriculum requires all high school students in Nordic countries to be taught dance and movement, and the university students have only a short time in which to acquire competence, awareness, and important leadership tools for their future as high school teachers. This is not an easy task. Therefore, it is important to develop innovative educational processes. Embodied leadership must in fact be developed through richly faceted real-world learning processes and a common educational journey.

### **Dancing Into the Beautiful Risk of Education—Setting the Research Scene**

Research shows that it can be challenging for many young people to develop teaching competency and the leadership they will need in their impending work as teachers (Diddams & Chang, 2012; Jørgensen, Winther, Nybo, & Svendler Nielsen, 2018; Lundvall & Meckbach, 2008; Winther, 2012). This is an issue that applies to many professional areas including movement teaching and dance (Jørgensen, et al., 2018; Lundvall, & Meckbach, 2008; Mattsson & Lundvall, 2015; Rustad, 2017). On the other hand, research also shows that there is a clear connection between embodiment and leadership (Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2010; Avolio, Walumbwa, Weber, 2009; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Winther, 2012, 2013). In all human relationships, the language of the body is both a socially and personally toned mother tongue, which follows us throughout our lives. Therefore, the language of the body is also of great importance for somatic awareness, presence, communication reading, and leadership in teaching practice (Diddams & Chang, 2012; Winther, 2012; 2013).

Still the language of the body, and certainly movement, is an often-overlooked leadership potential in many educations in present-day society (Guastella Lindsay, 2013; Winther, 2012, 2013). Here, Pounder (2008) also argues in favor of leadership research that could embrace not only school contexts but also university contexts. Thus, the film unfolds in an actual research area and is part of a current research and educational effort at University of Copenhagen. This effort is focused on examining *how* realistic and challenging courses of education may advance the students' embodied leadership with regard to their chosen field, their personal resources, and their roles as future teachers. Thus, the study examines how such courses of education may give possible answers to current educational issues.

Biesta's writing too is a framework for the rationale of this project, which in many ways contains "beautiful risks," but also necessary possibilities for development. In his critical writing,

Biesta (2013) states that teachers and educators in present-day society are increasingly asked to take the risk out of education in order to create strong, secure, effective and predictable courses of study. Actually, this current wave may also lead to a weakness in educational systems (Biesta, 2013). According to Biesta, sustainable education is not only a *reproduction* of what we already know, but also a way of *developing* new ways in which new beginnings and new beginners can come into the world. Therefore, educators must have the courage to move into the world of the beautiful risks of education, involving the qualification, socialization, and the *subject-ness* of those we educate. Such an orientation, Biesta states, is not just about how we can get the world into our students—but perhaps more importantly, how we can help our students to involve in and thus come into the world (Biesta, 2013). Perhaps this also has "to do with emancipation and freedom and with the responsibility that comes with such freedom" (Biesta, 2013, p. 4).

In *Dancing Days With Young People*, we take the risk. Instead of just letting the university students—as Biesta states—*reproduce* the known, they themselves are *given responsibility* and are *placed* in real-world teaching positions, which can also qualify their movement knowledge. They must become involved as *subjects* in a relevant way, while at the same time, they literally dance into the beautiful risk of education. Even though this opens up for a complex, unpredictable, and challenging learning process, the young people also meet responsibility, trust, and love—and more importantly, the chance to work with their subjective processes related to embodiment, creativity, and leadership. These are precisely the themes of this art-based research film.

Such a richly faceted, sensual, and aesthetic educational process is difficult to document through verbal language alone. For this reason, art-based research methods are such a welcome possibility. Here, film is one of many ways in which educational researchers can challenge educational questions and myths (Barone, 2003). By using visual art-based and narrative-inspired research methods, the researcher, the film team, and the young people in the film's research and educational process are examining the same research questions relevant to education—together.

How can we develop somatic awareness, creativity, and leadership through innovative courses of education? And how can close-to-practice, artistic elicitation methods contribute to examining, documenting, and visualizing this process?

This article will illustrate and discuss primarily the research process and the collaboration between the artists, the 21 young university students, and the researcher. Furthermore, it will describe briefly the chronology of the educational process and illustrate some of the students' lived experiences, which are not visible in the film.

### **Developing the Film—A Fusion of Art, Teaching, and Research**

The idea of making a film came as "a butterfly" over a cup of coffee. A butterfly is colorful and fleeting, flying on the lightest wings. If we try to hold on to it, or catch it with too heavy a

grip, the magic disappears and the moment is gone with the dust from its wings. So must an idea that comes like a butterfly be followed up with creativity and humility, and one must be open for that form of research, which can meet the flow and sensuality—which is too, the very essence of dance.

As a researcher, university teacher, and dance teacher, I have been inspired by the growing landscape between art and research for many years (Winther, 2008). Here, the possibilities for transforming research data into *artistic* productions, as ethnodrama, performance, film, or dance, have been developed throughout the years (Bagley & Canzienne, 2002; Douglas & Careless, 2008; Jones, 2017; McNiff, 2009; Pink, 2014; Roberts, 2008; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes, Nilges, Swan, & Dowling, 2003). Art-based and performative research practices have the possibility to help researchers give insight into lived experiences and “hear the heartbeats” of other people (McMahon, 2016; Richardson, 2004). They can emphasize the dynamic and expressive tone of the data and hence have the possibility to sustain sensory life in the experiences, which other forms of representation may not have. Furthermore, they have the possibility to lead the audience on a journey, after which they come away with a sense of what the experience must have felt like (Sparkes, 2002).

As O'Donoghue (2009) states, arts-based educational research also focuses on the idea that the arts have particular insights into and enhance our understanding of phenomena that are of interest to educational researchers. On a methodological level, Leavy (2015) states that arts-based practices have been developed for all research phases including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. Thus, art-based and performative research also has the ability to enhance and enrich explication of the research topic, allowing creativity to be a component of academic pursuits (Hearing & Jones, 2018; Liebenberg, 2009; McMahon, 2016; Pink, 2014; Richardson, 2004). As Gergen and Gergen (2018) state, enormous riches are offered to social scientists through the lens of dance, music, and other performative methods. Here, film too has the possibility of reaching people not only intellectually but emotionally as well (Hearing & Jones, 2018).

When the butterfly and the idea of the film came, it was not a question of how to transform data into an artistic production but rather an idea about documenting, researching, and visualizing the whole vivid educational process through a creative visual medium. The documentary film instructor and I met, and we had many conversations before she turned up in the class of 21 young university students. We agreed on the research process as a journey. We talked about how the lenses of film and dance could show the “heartbeats” of all the young people, and thereby carefully open, express, and enrich making sense of the phenomena. We reflected systematically on the methods we would use, a time schedule, and a chronological frame of the educational processes. But everything that happened along the way had grown from the process and the authentic setting with these 21 university students and the 200 high school pupils, to whom the young students taught dance. Therefore, the project is not about “me being a researcher, her being a filmmaker, and the students and pupils being researched.” It is

a collaborative project. Here, many of us had several roles: as researchers, artists, and subjects of the research. And all in a kind of new land, gathering data from the journey.

## Creative Souls—Multiple Roles in Research

How film—and images—are seen, sensed, created, and expressed is also shaped by the cultural values and experiences that both the photographer and, later, the viewer bring to them (Hearing & Jones, 2018; Liebenberg, 2009). This was also a theme present in this project. At the same time, as the filmmaker was making the documentary, she was also a coresearcher together with me. As she was familiar with documentary films, performative research methods seemed to be very close to her world. Furthermore, she was the one who chose the camera's angles—an “eye” that could also be regarded as a subject of research. As I am both a researcher and dance teacher, I am also familiar with performance work and expressive polyvocal productions (Winther, 2008; Winther, Engel, Nørgaard & Herskind, 2015; Snowber, 2002). Even though I had never been involved in creating a film before, I have a creative soul and performative tools in my backpack.

As the film reflects the educational process, I am also visible in the film as a teacher; and even if I were to be seen in a supporting role, this is also necessarily a subject for research and challenging as a researcher (Salvadore, 2018).

Instead of the filmmaker writing the script and focus of the film, or me being a researcher with a plan for the visual product, we developed both parts of it together as a team. Before we started filming, the film instructor suggested that we should contact a few students to follow, to let them be the main characters and subjects of the film. I saw this as a good possibility, but I also suggested letting both the common educational process and the university students' subjective learning experiences show us what to do. During the initial phases, the film instructor and I therefore agreed on letting the film answer the research questions via two interwoven tracks:

1. One track is the documentation of the education process chronologically. It illustrates the educational journey and the beautiful risks of working with innovative teaching methods, embodied leadership, and *Dancing Days With Young People*.
2. The other track is following several students and the themes in their subjective yet interwoven processes in the mirror of the chronological phases. These themes were to be chosen both from the visual film data and from written material from the students' “inner voices.”

## The Inner Voices of the Students—Phenomenological-Inspired Experience Descriptions

At the same time as we were all interested in the visual documentation of the educational processes, we also chose to open up for the young university students' “inner voices” and their subjectively felt processes. Thus, the students were both

subjects in the film and coresearchers of the whole research project. As coresearchers, they were all writing about their individual embodied leadership processes and their experiences with dance as a creative art. This may also be seen as a collaborative quality, as the students were creating representations of their own experiences (Buckingham, 2009).

This participatory approach is inspired by practitioner research (Dads & Hart, 2001; Jarvis, 1999; Winther, 2015). The 21 students were writing firsthand subjective phenomenological-inspired experience descriptions (Winther, 2015). Phenomenological descriptions capture the experienced and keep the phenomenon sensual, rich, and alive (Allen-Collison, 2016; Todres, 2009). This challenges a critical dialogue between intuition and reflection (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2004; Todres, 2007; Winther, 2015). This kind of language also gives the possibility of being expressive, evocative, felt, and directly associated with lived experiences (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003).

The students produced their own texts individually. This was also part of their own learning processes. At the same time, I as researcher collected all of the students' narratives, thus gaining a unique insight into both the individual student's inner voice and the themes, which were either unique or typical for all of them.

Together with the film's expressive and visual material, the students' written experience descriptions formed the basis for the research analyses and the themes that became prominent in the finished film. But first the film instructor became part of the teaching community, as she followed us for two weeks through a period with three educational phases.

## The Documentary Film Instructor Became Part of the Teaching Community

As the film instructor was very familiar with filming in natural settings, she soon became just another member of our teaching community in the class. She filmed from the corners of the room, or she moved around and almost became part of the dance. Sometimes she came very close to us, but it became part of our common and creative process.

One of the innovative qualities of the progressive educational process is that I as a university teacher, inspired by Biesta (2013), gradually challenged the risk by giving up more and more control, responsibility, and leadership as the students began to come onto the stage and became "captains of their own ships." Here, their real-world experiences were their most important teachers. This process followed three phases, which are also visible in the chosen film chronology.

### First Phase: Dance, Teaching Roles, and Embodied Leadership Competence

Dance is a large, challenging, and complex subject to teach. Before the students are themselves able to teach, there is an intense period in which they are taught by me as their teacher. This is also shown in the film. In the first phase, the film shows how the university students are introduced in both theory and

practice to various dance styles and teaching roles. Here, they learn to work with four roles:

(1) "The master" who can both guide and demonstrate a dance. (2) "The energizer" who uses his or her joyful moving energy in order to create a trustful and playful atmosphere in the room. (3) "The animator" who can start more creative and improvisational learning processes. (4) "The coach" who can coach smaller groups or single pupils (Winther et al., 2015).

In this phase, the students are also introduced to the language of the body and the body's significance in leadership, contact, and communication. The students are introduced to the theory and practice of developing their own *embodied leadership competence* (Winther, 2013). This may be defined as a combination of three interrelated principles, which are always present, visible, and felt in a teaching space:

1. *Self-contact and somatic awareness*: Contact with one's own body and personal feelings, the ability to be focused and present, and the ability to include one's heart and still keep a professional focus and a private boundary.
2. *Communication reading and contact ability*: The ability to see, listen, sense, and notice; the ability to "read" both verbal and bodily communication; the ability to create trustful contact with others; and the ability to contain and manage conflicts.
3. *Leadership in groups or situations*: Professional overview, radiation, centering, clear leadership of the group or situation; the ability to enter or hold a space or room with a healthy and body-based authority (Winther, 2012, 2013).

Regardless of whether the students will experience success or challenges when they are going to teach dance, their processes on these three levels are important for developing their own leadership. Embodied leadership competence is present in all teaching spaces—and it is a visible and constantly changing phenomenon especially in movement and dance.

In this course, we work specifically to develop the students' self-contact and somatic awareness, and their ability and courage to create, take, and hold a room (Winther, 2012). Then, they teach each other in the second phase.

### Second Phase: The Students Teach Each Other in Independently Chosen Dance Styles—Microteaching and Peer Feedback

After the relatively short introductory period, the film shows how the students are assigned the task of choosing a dance style that they would like to teach. This is a creative process. Some choose the cha-cha, while others choose hip-hop, salsa, haka, or other styles from all over the world. Then, they plan their teaching. In the course of two intensive days, the film shows how the students teach each other and thus have the possibility to learn in synergy-creating common learning processes. This phase is inspired by the methods of *microteaching*.

Microteaching is a teaching method in which students develop and try out short teaching sequences in shifts, teach each other, and then go through reflection and feedback sequences. By giving the students the responsibility for teaching in practice, and thus the responsibility for their own and others' learning, they have the possibility to engage deeply and qualitatively in the learning process (Jørgensen et al., 2018; Major, Harris, & Zakrajsek, 2016).

The microteaching days take place just a few days before Dance Day. Much is in play, and the process is intense and serious, full of involvement. The film shows how students give and get concise, developing, and humorous feedback on dance, theoretical concepts, and the didactic structure of their workshop. Beyond this, the coaching phase of the individual student's processes contributes to develop familiarity with various teaching roles and their personal embodied leadership competence (Winther, 2012, 2013).

After these two days, Carl<sup>1</sup> writes:

I feel good about being "on." The next step for me is to get better contact with myself. To be more present, personal and focused and to step into the character as a person.

And Rasmus writes:

I'm prepared for the role of leader—especially after the microteaching sequence—I feel capable of taking the room and holding it while I'm teaching. Now only time will tell, if this succeeds.

Simone writes:

Dancing itself is now progressively less unfamiliar to me, but tomorrow I'll still be moving out into deeper water than I've done spontaneously previously. Just personally, I know that I'm a very sensitive person who can easily let my feelings change rapidly and let them get control over me. Therefore, one of the important things tomorrow is, that I can have good self-contact in order to avoid getting into one of the three classic reactions to insecure teaching: fight, flight or freeze.

### Third Phase: Youth and Leadership Dance Day

Many students experience, as Simone did, that teaching dance also demands courage. Therefore, in the third phase, the film and the educational process move into the authentic real-world phase (Jørgensen et al., 2018; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996).

When the 200 participants from six different high schools begin to stream through the doors to Dance Day, there are many high school pupils, as well as university students, who have some butterflies in their stomach.

Here, Anna writes:

Now it's time to dare to come forward. I put out my chest and straighten my back. I smile to the participants, while I take a step closer to them, so they can hear me better. I remind myself to speak clearly and distinctly. I look out at the mass of people. I can see all of them, and they can see me. All right—let the dance begin.

The purpose of Dance Day is also to celebrate the joy of life, dance, and community across political, cultural, and ethnic lines

and barriers. It focuses on the joy of movement, beautiful music, community, and cultural meetings. Throughout the day, the high school pupils participate in various workshops in which there are possibilities for enriching experiences for all of them.

The film shows various processes and workshops. First, we meet the powerful haka and the streetwise hip-hop. Seconds afterward, the film moves into the workshop spaces of salsa and cha-cha. All the workshop spaces are filled with young people with various cultural backgrounds—all speaking together through the universal language of dance.

Both the film and the written experience descriptions show that for the university students, Dance Day is a trial by fire. Even if I feel joyful—will it go well? How do I motivate a large group of high school pupils? What happens to my self-contact and somatic awareness if I get nervous? Can I master both leadership and teaching roles?

If the student succeeds in keeping leadership, self-contact, and a resonant communication with the high school pupils, the three levels of embodied professional competence are in a dynamic flow in which the student's leadership can grow gradually. Even if many of the university students were "in deep water," the film shows many small joyful and intense situations in which they really succeed in their embodied professional leadership.

After a hip-hop workshop, Simone writes:

What a wild, happy atmosphere! Everyone wearing sunglasses! We've finally reached climax! We've got them to warm up by getting a few cautious pupils to dance, and then step on the gas out on the floor. People are dancing really well, and they're smiling and dancing without a care in the world! So great!

On the other hand, if the student's leadership is challenged, this could mean that the student may lose self-contact and somatic awareness—and thus her own embodied leadership.

This happens to Simone's team in the same workshop:

The song ends . . . I look up at the clock. Shit. I see that there are still 10 minutes left of this period, before the pupils will go to their next class. We become unsure, and fool around a little. How could this happen? We had prepared reasonably well.

Also Jeanne experiences challenging minutes:

I'm standing in front of these 20 young people, their eyes on me. Forty eyes. I would like to invite them into creating the situation. That I'm not alone in setting up the learning situation, but that we are co-creators, together. They don't know what to do. Stand still and look around. And look. And then I notice that I slip out—out of myself, out of the situation. Begin to look at myself from the outside. Become an observer, not a doer. . . . terrible minutes.

Even though Simone and Jeanne are challenged in the above situations, they have the possibility to change it all in the next few minutes. And shortly afterward, they have a new dance workshop and thus a new possibility to regain their self-contact and somatic awareness and thus their leadership.



### From Enemy Stuff to Love and Leadership— The Chosen Film Themes

In the collaborative process in which the film gradually grew through the filmed material and analysis of all the students' experience descriptions, the themes of the film evolved. It became clear to us that one of the themes in the film was going to be the movement from lack of competence, *teaching something I'm not good at*, and resistance, *enemy stuff*, to the joy of being able to master teaching dance in spite of self-experienced inadequacy. Another clear theme running through the material was about being able to master the experienced contrasts between sensitivity, self-contact, and somatic awareness in relation to the leadership dimension in teaching. This was also evident in the theme of teaching roles, and it was mirrored by the metaphor running through the material of being the captain of one's own ship.

The theme of exuberance and creativity was also clear, as for several students, it was meaningful to experience how their own creativity, joy in dancing, somatic awareness, and embodied leadership motivated the 200 high school students. This theme is clearly visible in scenes where high school students wear sunglasses and improvise flick-flaks in the hip-hop workshop, or where powerful energy from the traditional dance haka streams out of the young multicultural bodies. It is also seen in the cha-cha between two girls with different cultural backgrounds, who are then beautifully met in a second-long motivating hug from their young teacher. These and other themes of the film animate in many ways also Biesta's (2013) point about the beautiful risk of education. Such risks can initially be felt like ships rocking on the waves. The film and the students' writings show however that these are innovative educational processes taking place in the intersection between a safe framework, creative possibilities,

and a responsible meeting with the real world. And that this can be enriching, showing new ways forward.

### The Fusion of Art and Science. Composing the Film—The Collaboration Between the Film Instructor, the Researcher, and the Creative Editor

What is Performative Social Science (PSS) then, Art or Science? It isn't one or the other. It is a fusion of both, creating a new model where tools from the Arts and Humanities are explored for their utility in enriching the ways in which Social Science subjects might be researched and/or disseminated or communicated to various communities. (Jones, 2017, p. 2)

Through this process, the above quote came into play many times with all its complexity. Filming was the easiest part. After that, we had so many hours of film that we had to leave out long sequences and find ways to tell a long story in only 12 min. The film instructor and the creative editor made the first raw version, and I read all the experience descriptions from the students. Then, we looked through the scenes together, and slowly a story on film emerged that had focus and analytical points.

Accepting and combining the tones and themes of both the visual and written material thus opened up for a multifaceted process. Here, it was necessary to acknowledge the way film tells a story, the focus and methods of the research, the teacher's ethical dilemmas, and the art of film editing. In a short time and by using tight musical editing, the film can tell a long story and jump back and forth in time. The filmed material has a fullness that even with large amounts of written data; it would be difficult to convey it briefly. At the same time, it was important that this story was multilayered and had a sounding board in the research



questions, the whole film material, the chronological educational process, and the students' inner voices. This sounding board was also comprised of research literature, the state of the art, and many longer texts that cannot be contained in a short film (Bagley & Canzienne, 2002; Buckingham, 2009; Douglas & Careless, 2008; Jones, 2017; McNiff, 2009; Pink, 2014; Roberts, 2008; Snowber, 2002; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes et al., 2003). Beyond this, throughout the whole process, we acknowledged artistic feeling and our different intuitive voices in order to let the material speak to our heads, arts, and hearts.

At times, these various languages unified and melted together, and everyone was enriched. At other times, we had discussions between the arts. And many times, one of us had to make a compromise.

Sometimes the fusion between us also meant that the film instructor attended to what I as a researcher should have done, but what it was difficult to do as a teacher. This could be about showing vulnerability, or situations where students were "on thin ice," challenged by the situation. Sometimes I wanted to cut out such scenes, partly from ethical considerations, and partly because I—deep down in my teacher's soul—wanted to tell a positive story, and I knew that there were many "sunny" episodes that had been edited out. It was unexpected for me to realize how vulnerable it is, too, to let others see into the teaching space—which for many teachers is really a confidential and intimate space. Here, it was good that we were several people involved in cocreating the filmed research narrative, so that it would show many sides of the process, while at the same time protecting the integrity of those involved.

Thus, the film was shuttled between the instructor, the creative editor, and myself as researcher, many times over, until we felt that we had a narrative that covered all the facets. And that each of us, from our own standpoint as well as together, could stand for it.

### **Ethics—Consent, Carefulness, and Mutual Trust in Filmmaking**

Research with art-based research methods requires careful attention to ethical issues covering consent, culture, and the importance of developing mutual trust, as well as respectful relationships between researchers and participants (Buckingham, 2009; Pink, 2014; Salvatore, 2018; Wiles, et. al 2008). There were also ethical considerations in connection with this film. All of the 21 university students consented to their education being portrayed in the film. We also had the permission to film from the chosen university. During the whole process, a mutual trust between the film instructor, the students, and myself as researcher developed, along with our growing reflexive collaboration.

This is an important ethical issue in visual research (Pink, 2014). However, in the editing phase, based on technical and ethical considerations, we chose to let some of the students be portrayed in the foreground and others in the background. The film team cannot know how the material will be used or interpreted (Pink, 2014). Therefore, all of the scenes were carefully

edited in order to ensure, as well as we could, that the visual documentation respected the young people's integrity (Buckingham, 2009; Pink, 2014).

All of the 200 high school pupils were informed in advance that a film was being recorded. They also had the possibility to choose for themselves whether they wished to go to workshops, that would be filmed, or if they wished to go to workshops that would not be filmed. On Dance Day, the instructor filmed, as agreed, a workshop in the dance style *dance hall*. The most unique scenes happened here, with joyfully dancing young people from very different cultural backgrounds; and already at the time of filming, we had a feeling that this was to be one of the central scenes in the finished film.

Near the end of Dance Day, a high school teacher came to us and said that a couple of the high school students who were girls with Muslim backgrounds didn't want to be in the film after all. We spoke to both the teacher and the girls at once and met their wishes with warm smiles, understanding, and respect. There can be many reasons why the girls did not wish to participate. There could have been particular aspects of religion, culture, femininity, or sensuality that were important for us to be aware of. This emphasized the importance of cutting out the scene.

This issue is well known in art-based research with multicultural faith groups. Nevertheless, it's important to point out that in all research it is crucial that the participants have the possibility to withdraw from the project. We would have made the same decision regardless of which high school student had come with that request. Thus, these girls' wishes were also a welcome lesson about the importance of caution and trust in filmmaking. Even though such requests can seem like a limitation to filmmaking at first sight, they also open up for welcoming interesting perspectives and creative questions for future coproduced performative research.

### **Creating Music From the Inner Ear. Collaboration With the Musician**

Since the film is about dance, there was a certain amount of live sound in the film, which was music from various dance styles. The film instructor and I had initially agreed that the music in the film should not necessarily support a story about dance styles. It should rather be a story about embodiment, communication, innovation, and leadership. Therefore, we had contacted a professional musician and composer in an early phase of the project. His task was, in cooperation with the other themes, partly to ensure the sound of some of the dance styles, while at the same time compose music that could both contain and frame such youthful raw expression and the vulnerability that radiates from the young bodies in the film. This applies to both the young teachers *and* the 200 high school students whom they taught. This part of the film project turned out to be a fantastic, but also demanding process, both artistically and as to the research involved. With reference to Denora (2001, p. 165), Carless and Douglass (2011) states that although music is found everywhere in modern societies, *the significance of*



*music's ubiquity often goes unnoticed within social sciences.* Music, rhythms, and instruments have the capacity to communicate experiences in powerful ways, expressing human emotions as well (Carless & Douglass, 2011; Carless & Douglas, 2009; Winther et al., 2015). Given the expressive power of music, choosing the instruments and rhythms, and finding the tones were also challenging in the film process. How could I as a researcher give any guidelines as to how the music should be, when I could not create it myself, but only feel it and “hear it in my inner ear”? I could also hear when the composer's suggestions did not chime with the emotional narrative tone that lay in and between the lines in the students' processes. Only after several attempts, and long nights for the musician, did the music begin to take form. We found each other, and the music began to play its own role in a research narrative, that is primarily carried by the visual filmic expression, and by both concrete and interpersonal dance—including also the partially unexpressed emotional universe. It was obvious to both of us when the music and the chosen instruments were resonating with the chosen themes of the story and the young people's various emotional tones in the film. Especially, the first and last scenes of the film are carried by these emotional tones, while other scenes are connected to the different dance styles.

The first scene illustrating young energy has a rougher and more rhythmic quality, while the last scenes are combined with softer tones, which form a connection to the end of the educational journey. This softer music also resonates with the students' implicit inner voices, which show the sensitivity, development, and strength they have experienced in this journey. Beyond this, the music resonates with what each student has said about his or her learning process toward the end of the film. Thus, the music also underlines the beautiful risk, as it is important that innovative processes also be protected by a clear structure and an embracing teacher.

## How Is This Research?

This has been one of the most challenging, joyful, and time-consuming research processes I have been involved in. In order to answer the question of whether creative, close-to-practice, artistic, and innovative elicitation methods may contribute to examining, documenting, and visualizing educational processes, I will also reflect on this by inquiring into the fundamental question: How is this research?

In spite of the film lasting only 12 min, it builds on, as mentioned, a large amount of data. This applies to the filmed material, the themes of the film, the young people's vivid movement expressions, and their spoken voices. The themes are also reflected in the students' inner voices and phenomenological-inspired experience descriptions that are visible in this article. They form a partly unexpressed sounding board in the film. Collaboration with the film instructor, musician, and editor also contributed to create a fusion of art-based languages, which may give the film's audience rich, visual, embodied, and emotional insight into the selected educational processes. And which may open up for a sense of what this

educational journey must have felt like. Even though the words in this article enliven parts of the story of the 21 students and the 200 high school pupils with their diverse cultural backgrounds, the reader will not gain a visual, auditory, or sensual understanding of the wide variations in and complexity of this project. A film is polyvocal and emphasizes the expressive and emotional tones of the data. It opens up the possibility of articulating the sensory life of the young people's dance and leadership processes, which other forms of representation may not have. The coproduced film, the music, the students' underlying voices, and this text show one of many ways to develop body awareness, creativity, and leadership through innovative courses of education. It is not an easy task. It opens up for innovative educational processes, which do not minimize but rather challenge the risk of education. Therefore, the findings of this collaborative research project are multilayered.

They show that embodied leadership may be developed through processes in which joyous, vulnerable, and subjectively experienced risk-filled situations become part of a common creative educational journey. The positive, trusting relationships with the many young people also show, by their dancing and diverse cultural expression, that such process can create synergy and meaning for all involved. Dance Day is, namely, also about creativity, friendships, and as I-the teacher -, say in the film: “love.”

It is our hope that the film may also inspire other educators and researchers in their work with young people. The liveliness of film gives the possibility of enhancing unique understandings of phenomena that are of interest to educational and performative researchers. In this way, the film is an artistic contribution to the development of coproduced filmmaking as a valuable research method. The film may therefore also be regarded as an independent art-based research publication. But even a film cannot show the complex processes that happen in the world of reality. Data gathered through a film are not objective or more truthful than other approaches (Buckingham, 2009). A film is, as are all other research publications, only a humble representation of reality, carefully created and expressed by the research team. It can open up for a multiplicity of meaning, which will be shaped by the experiences, feelings, and cultural contexts of the audience.

It is my hope that this article from the world of words may give a transparent and expanded glance at the educational as well as the methodological research questions around which the film revolves. The film team, the students, and I have experienced the creative and challenging landscape between art and research. It isn't one or the other. It is a fusion of both. Challenging and enriching the present and future ways in which we do research. And perhaps inviting new butterflies to come with creative ideas over cups of coffee.

## Filmlink Author Note

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## Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

## Note

1. The students' real names have been changed.

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